

OLC #78/999

25 May 1978

MFR

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing for Senator Percy's Staffers on Africa

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1. Scott Cohen and Allison Rosenberg of Senator Percy's staff visited Headquarters this date for a briefing on Africa. [redacted] of ORPA and the undersigned participated.

2. Cohen began by saying that he was less convinced than others about the scale and significance of the Cuban presence in Africa. We showed him the chart with the numbers of Soviet and Cuban military personnel in African countries and discussed in some detail the Cuban involvement in running military operations and civilian ministries in Angola. We said that while we had no convincing evidence that Cuban soldiers crossed the border in the Shaba invasion, we were satisfied with the evidence of Cuban support for and training of the ex-Katangans over the past two years. We pointed to the better show by the invading forces when compared with 1977 as further evidence of expert training.

3. On Ethiopia, we described the factions operating in Eritrea, the countries supporting those factions, the mixed equities of the Soviets and Cubans, and Mengistu's strong desire to end this problem by military means once and for all.

4. Cohen and Rosenberg were particularly interested in what non-African countries could or would do to thwart the Soviets and Cubans. We noted the French military involvement, British interest in Rhodesia, a much reduced Chinese role, and the largely commercial interests of other West European countries and Japan.

5. Rosenberg asked what the US administration could do "if, as some say, its hands weren't tied by Congress." We said we were not prepared to comment on the wisdom of

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US involvement in any particular country or in any particular way. We did, however, note that to the extent the Soviets perceived a pattern of US inaction, this would be a factor in their own behavior. Many other factors would go into the calculation, but the expectation of no US reaction could only encourage Soviet and Cuban involvement.



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Congressional Support Staff

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